DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 371 507 EC 303 094

TITLE	Severe Disabilities. ERIC Digest #311. Revised.
INSTITUTION	Council for Exceptional Children, Reston, Va.; ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children, Reston, Va.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	90
CONTRACT	RI88062007
NOTE	3p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Council for Exceptional Children, 1920 Association Dr., Reston, VA 22091-1589 ($1 each, minimum order $5 prepaid).
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses - ERIC Clearinghouse Products (071)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Curriculum; Definitions; *Educational Methods; Elementary Secondary Education; Intervention; *Severe Disabilities; Student Characteristics
IDENTIFIERS	ERIC Digests

ABSTRACT

This digest defines the term "severe disabilities"; lists some typical behavioral characteristics of individuals with severe disabilities, such as self-mutilation and lack of self-care skills; and outlines the educational implications of severe disabilities. The digest stresses the need for a multidisciplinary approach to education; the need for a curriculum grounded in preliminary sensory motor stimulation and subsequent stress on five major areas: motor, self-help, communication, social/interpersonal, and cognitive skills. Moreover, there is the need for prevocational/vocational training, leisure skills development, and daily living skills; and the need to carefully structure instruction in even the most basic skills as severely disabled individuals do not learn easily by incidental learning. A list of 11 references and 7 organizations providing resources concludes the digest. (JDD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children
THE COUNCIL FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN
1920 Association Drive • Reston, VA 22091-1589
FAX (703) 264-9494

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

ERIC Digest

DIGEST #E311

Revised 1990

ED 371 507

SEVERE DISABILITIES

What Is Meant by "Severe Disabilities"?

The classifications of severe handicaps, severe/profound impairments, or multiple disabilities are less than precise. Children so labeled present a complex picture: they might include those with diagnoses of mental retardation, schizophrenia, autism, or cerebral palsy. Further behavioral, sensory, or orthopedic problems may also be involved.

Mental retardation may be the central and single largest category represented in severe disabilities. The more severe the retardation, the greater is the chance for concomitant problems.

Children with severe disabilities used to be easily defined: they were those children excluded from school on the basis of extensive mental, physical, and/or behavioral impairments that were considered permanent in nature.

More recent efforts to define the population have emphasized the educational considerations rather than static deficiencies. For some students, severe disability may be a transitory condition during which the individual requires frequent care, supervision, and/or assistance.

Baker (1979) put it this way:

> The severely handicapped individual is one whose ability to provide for his or her own basic life sustaining and safety needs is so limited, relative to the proficiency expected on the basis of chronological age, that it could pose a serious threat to his or her survival. (p. 60)

What Are Some Typical Characteristics of Individuals with Severe Disabilities?

Severely disabled individuals may exhibit one or more of the following behaviors:

- Self-mutilation.
- Ritualistic behaviors.
- Self-stimulation.
- Failure to attend or relate to others.
- Lack of self-care skills.
- Lack of verbal communication skills.
- Lack of basic physical mobility.

What Are the Educational Implications of Severe Disabilities?

Students with severe disabilities are now attending local schools. Some have been released from institutions, others from isolation at home, and still others have been identified at birth and served in early intervention programs. Whatever their avenue of approach, their arrival at school brings unique issues to the fore, including:

- The degree and quality of interaction between nondisabled and severely disabled students.
- The increasing importance of a multidisciplinary approach with input from occupational, physical, and speech/language therapists; nurses; audiologists; psychologists; social workers; and pediatricians.
- The need for a curriculum grounded in preliminary sensory motor stimulation and subsequent stress on five major areas: motor, self-help, communication, social/interpersonal, and cognitive skills.
- The growing importance of prevocational/vocational training and leisure skills development in the severely disabled student's life as he or she ages.
- The need for arrangements made within the classroom setting to provide for medication, dietary needs, and self-care requirements.
- The use of technological advances, specifically computer applications and electronic communication devices.
- The advent of community living arrangements and the resulting stress on programming for the greatest degree possible of independent living.

Severely disabled individuals do not learn as easily by incidental learning as do less disabled and nondisabled persons. Therefore, instruction in even the most basic skills must be carefully structured and planned.

REFERENCES

Baker, D. B. (1979). Severely handicapped: Toward an inclusive definition. *Journal of the Association for the Severely Handicapped, 1979, 4*(1), 52–65.

Finnie, N. R. (1975). *Handling the young cerebral palsied child at home*. New York: E. P. Dutton.

Haring, N. G., & Bricker, D. D. (Eds.). (1978). *Teaching the severely handicapped* (Vol. 3). Columbus, OH: Special Press.

Jegard, S., Anderson, L., Glazer, C., & Witold, A. (1980). *A comprehensive program for multi-handicapped children*. Saskatoon, Canada: Alvin Buckwold Centre.

Orelove, F. P., & Sobsey, D. (1987). *Educating children with multiple disabilities: A transdisciplinary approach*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

Sailor, W., & Guess, D. (1983). *Severely handicapped students: An instructional design*. Burlington, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Stainback, S., & Stainback, W. (1980). *Educating children with severe maladaptive behaviors*. New York: Grune & Stratton.

Stainback, S., & Stainback W. (1985). *Integration of students with severe handicaps into regular schools*. Reston, VA: The Council for Exceptional Children/Eric Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children.

Van Etten, G., Arkell, C., & Van Etten, C. (1980). *The severely and profoundly handicapped: Programs, methods, and materials*. St. Louis: C. V. Mosby.

Walsh, S. R., & Holzberg, R. (Eds.). (1979). *Understanding and educating the deaf blind/severely and profoundly handicapped*. Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas.

EC 303094

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

York, R. L., & Edgar, E. (Eds.). (1979). *Teaching the severely handicapped* (Vol. 4). Columbus, OH: Special Press.

Resources

Association for Retarded Citizens
P.O. Box 6109
Arlington, TX 76005
817/640-0204

The Association for the Severely Handicapped
7010 Roosevelt Way, N.E.
Seattle, WA 98115
206/283-5055

ABLEDATA
Newington Children's Hospital
181 Cedar Street
Newington, CT 06111
203/667-5200

Center for Special Education Technology
The Council for Exceptional Children
1920 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091
703/620-3660
800/873-8255

National Easter Seal Society
2023 West Ogden Avenue
Chicago, IL 60612
312/243-8400

TRACE Research and Development Center
S-151 Waisman Center
1500 Highland Avenue
Madison, WI 53705-2280
608/262-6966

United Cerebral Palsy Association
7 Penn Plaza, Suite 804
New York, NY 10001
212/268-6655
800/USA-1UCP

ERIC Digests are in the public domain and may be freely reproduced and disseminated.

This publication was prepared with funding from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, under contract no. RI88062007. The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI or the Department of Education.